

ABSTRACT

Title of Dissertation: STRUCTURE AND CHARACTERIZATION
IN THREE TIME PERIODS

Onyu Park, Doctor of Musical Arts, 2009

Dissertation Directed By: Leon Major, Professor/Director,
School of Music

Structure and Characterization in three time periods is a study and an analysis based on my performances as Ruth in *Later the Same Evening* by J. Musto and M. Campbell, Despina in *Così fan tutte* by W.A. Mozart and L. Da Ponte, and Atalanta in *Serse* by G.F. Handel with a libretto based on works by N. Minato and S. Stampiglia (librettist unknown). This dissertation focuses on the different structure of the three operas and the characterization of each of the three roles. In this project, the unique and important aspects and challenges in interpreting the three different roles – Ruth, Despina, and Atalanta - from three different time periods – the twenty-first century, Classical, and the Baroque - are explored. The recorded portion of this project consists of CD and DVD recordings of the three performances. *Later the Same Evening* was a world premiere opera, presented at the Kay Theater, Clarice Smith Performing Arts Center, on November 15th – 18th 2007 and at the National Gallery of Art, Washington D.C. on December 2nd, 2007. *Così fan tutte* and *Serse* were performed at the Kay Theater, Clarice Smith Performing Arts Center in April 23rd, 25th, 27th 2008, and April 18th, 22nd, 24th, 26th 2009, respectively.

STRUCTURE AND CHARACTERIZATION IN THREE TIME PERIODS

By

Onyu Park

Dissertation submitted to the Faculty of the Graduate School of the
University of Maryland, College Park, in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Musical Arts
2009

Advisory Committee:
Professor Leon Major, Chair
Professor Dominic Cossa
Ms. Martha Randall, Lecturer/Graduate Faculty
Professor Peter Beicken
Professor Edward Maclary

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Introduction

Later the Same Evening was commissioned by the Clarice Smith Performing Arts Center, the National Gallery of Art and the Maryland Opera Studio at the time of a retrospective exhibition of Edward Hopper's works in Washington D.C. in November 2007. Edward Hopper was a realist American painter known for his iconic images and scenes that exuded a sense of serene calmness and solitude. Inspired by five of Hopper's paintings, Mark Campbell, the librettist created stories of the characters on what could have happened before and after these people were captured on the canvases.

As it is the case with the characters in Hopper's paintings, the characters in *Later the Same Evening* either look out their window and observe the solitude of others, or look into a window and become aware their own solitude. Ruth is a young ballerina from Indianapolis, disheartened after having failed at numerous dance auditions in New York. Though Ruth sings in a trio and an ensemble along with the other characters, she does not actually interact with anyone throughout the entire piece.

Despina, on the other hand, interacts with all five characters in this tightly knit ensemble opera, *Così fan tutte*. W.A. Mozart and Da Ponte collaborated in creating one of Mozart's most successful *opera buffa*, *Così fan tutte*, *La scuola degli amanti*. The opera starts with trios then moves onto quartets and quintets and ends each act with lengthy sextets. Despina is a quick-witted maid to Fiordiligi and Dorabella. The success of the plot, which is to carry out Alfonso's plan, depends on how skillfully Despina executes the whole scheme to outsmart the girls. She is a clever, independent, "not-your-average"

maid. Unlike *Later the Same Evening* and *Serse*, there are numerous ensemble pieces such as duets, trios, quartets, quintets and sextet finales in this opera.

Atalanta in Handel's *Serse* also plays a similar action-figure role. Atalanta is Romilda's younger sister, secretly in love with Romilda's lover, Arsamene. Throughout the opera, the character development of Atalanta is noteworthy as her youthful infatuation later takes on a more deceitful color. Atalanta interacts with only certain characters in the opera. Unlike his other works of the *opera seria* genre, Handel altered the structure of the *da capo* aria and also used a variety of forms, such as the arietta and arioso. In contrast to *Così fan tutte* and *Later the Same Evening*, *Serse* is composed of mostly solo arias.

Dedication

For grandpa, H. Park

(1929-2007)

And dad, “CK” Park

(1950-2004),

Whose exemplary lives I am indebted to.

Acknowledgements

Special thanks to:

Professor and Director Leon Major for his time, wisdom, advice and guidance;

Mr. Gran “Tenacity” Wilson, for his timely encouragement,

wonderful teaching, and funny stories in voice imitations;

Professors Dominic Cossa and Martha Randall

for their continuous support and cheerful hearts;

Professors Delores Ziegler, Francois Loup, Carmen Balthrop,

Peter Beicken and Ed Maclary for their teaching as well as kind and uplifting words;

The William J. Fulbright Foundation for their generous grant and sponsorship

in making this degree possible;

“CK and Joy” for showing me the world from an early age,

providing me the tools to live as a citizen of the world,

and teaching me to give what I have to others, generously;

Grandma for your prayers; uncle, Professor. J.K. Park, for your support;

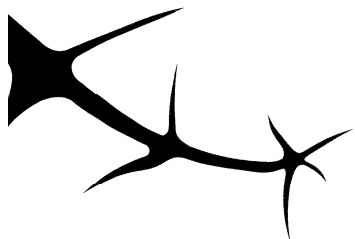
and my sister, J.D.Sarah Ensa for being my mentor and best ally.

S.D.G.

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CLARICE SMITH PERFORMING ARTS CENTER,
UNIVERSITY OF MARYLAND SCHOOL OF MUSIC
AND MARYLAND OPERA STUDIO PRESENT



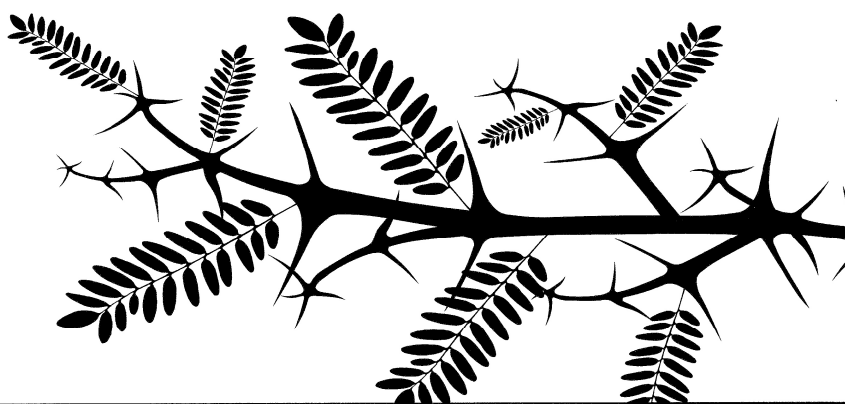
Xerxes

By George Frideric Handel

Libretto by an uncredited author, based on one by Silvio Stampiglia, itself based on an earlier one by Niccolò Minato

Performed in Italian with English titles

SATURDAY, APRIL 18, 2009 . 7:30PM
WEDNESDAY, APRIL 22, 2009 . 7:30PM
FRIDAY, APRIL 24, 2009 . 7:30PM
SUNDAY, APRIL 26, 2009 . 3PM



INA & JACK KAY THEATRE 19

CAST

***XERXES* CAST**

in order of appearance

Serse (Xerxes), the King of Persia:	Christopher Newcomer
Ancillus, a servant:	Zain Shariff
Arsamene, brother to the King:	Alexis Tantau
Two serving women:	Caroline Brent, Gillian Kraus-Neale
Elviro, servant to Arsamene:	Andrew Adelsberger
Romilda, beloved of Arsamene:	Astrid Marshall
Atalanta, sister to Romilda:	Onyu Park
Amastre, betrothed of Serse, disguised as a soldier:	Stephanie Sadownik
Ariodate, a general, father to Romilda and Atalanta:	Stephen Brody

Covers:

Amanda Opuszynski (Xerxes), Colin Brush (Elviro), Madeline Miskie (Romilda), Amelia Davis (Atalanta), Adrienne Webster (Amastre), Jarrod Lee (Ariodate)

Conductor:	Kenneth Slowik
Director:	Nick Olcott
Principal Coach:	Justina Lee
Scenic Designer:	Misha Kachman
Costume Designer:	Marsha LeBoeuf
Lighting Designer:	Scott Bolman
Wig & Make-up Designer:	Jeanne DiBattista Croke
Assistant Conductor and Recitative Pianist:	Joseph Gascho
Rehearsal Pianist:	Sun Ha Yoon
Production Stage Manager:	Maggie Villegas
Supertitles:	Amanda Opuszynski

The action takes place in a single day in the arboretum at the palace of Xerxes.

There will be one intermission.

XERXES by George Frideric Handel

Edited for the Halle Handel Edition by Rudolf Steglich.

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Chapter 1: Program Notes on *Serse*

The uniqueness of *Serse* and its Structure

After *Giulio Cesare*, *Serse* is one of Handel's most frequently performed operas today. In Handel's time, after it opened on April 15, 1738, it received only four more performances. It was typical of his last operas to receive few performances in London - seven for *Faramondo* (1738), two for *Imeneo* (1740), and three for *Deidamia* (1741) - where *opera seria* had been dominating for thirty years. The original audience of *Serse* was accustomed to the serious and heroic plots on themes such as love, death, jealousy and duty. They were not used to the mixture of the tragic and comic elements in *Serse*. Noted music critic Charles Burney said of the libretto of *Serse*: "it is one of the worst that Handel ever set to Music: for besides the feeble writing, there is a mixture of tragic-comedy and buffoonery in it, which Apostolo Zeno and Metastasio had banished from serious opera." ¹

The librettist of *Serse* is unknown but the libretto itself was based on the works of Niccolò Minato (c1630-1684) and Silvio Stampiglia (1664-1725). The works by these men had their roots in the Venetian operas where the text was of utmost importance. The plot employed a mixture of comic and tragic elements in a recitative and arioso setting of the text.

¹ Charles Burney, *A General History of Music*, II, London 1782: republished, ed. F. Mercer, London 1935/R 1957, p. 822., quoted in Terence Best, *Preface of Serse: Opera in tre atti*. HWV 40. (Kassel: Baerenreiter, 2006), IX.

In *Serse*, Handel was truer and freer in his dramatic instincts. He shortened the length of the arias, often omitted the traditional repeat of the *da capo* section, and did not adhere to the typical form of the recitative always leading into the aria. Recitatives appear in the middle of an aria and short aria-like songs appear in the middle of the recitatives. In Atalanta's scene with Elviro in No.23, scene 2 of act II, there is a constant exchange of short sung parts, arioso, and recitative. [See appendix A]

In Atalanta's first aria, No. 7, Handel inserts two measures of recitative, *Romilda notte e di va esclamando cosi*, in the middle of the aria thus delaying the return of the *da capo* section of the aria. The third section then, is a much shortened form of the first section.

Winton Dean in his book *Handel's Operas* comments on *Serse*, "Fewer than half of the solo vocal movements have a *da capo*...the twenty-one ariettas or ariosos,...vary between an interrupted snatch of song and a complete cavatina..."²

Another example is found in Atalanta's scene with Serse in No.26. Atalanta sings a short *da capo* aria. The repeat of the same tune with a different text, hence, a second verse of the aria, is interrupted by four measures of recitative with Serse, the king. The four measures serve to give dramatic meaning as to why she needs to repeat the same aria again. Atalanta is nervous that Serse might find out that Arsamene did not write the love letter to her. So she comes back to remind Serse one more time not to believe Arsamene since he will only pretend not to love her.

² Winton Dean. *Handel's Operas, 1726-1741*. (Woodbridge: Boydell Press), 422.

No.26. Aria

ATALANTA

Dira che amor per me piagato	He will tell you that love has not wounded
il cor non gli ha.	his heart for me.
Ma non gli date fé	But do not believe him
ch'egli fingendo va.	For he is pretending.

Recitativo

SERSE

Voi quel foglio lasciate a me per prova.	Leave me the note as proof.
--	-----------------------------

ATALANTA

(Bella frode se giova.)	(What joy, if it works.)
-------------------------	--------------------------

SERSE

Itene pure	You may go.
------------	-------------

ATALANTA

Ma vi ricordo...	But you will remember...
------------------	--------------------------

SERSE.

E che?	What?
--------	-------

Aria

ATALANTA

Dira che non m'amò,	He will tell you that he never loved me,
che mai per me languì.	that he never pined for me
Ma non credete, no,	But do not believe it, no,
ché fingerà così.	for he will pretend so.

Handel was a talented business man in the music field and skillful impresario who had the power to choose his own singers. He worked with the most famous opera singers of his time such as Farinelli (1705-1782), Senesino (1686-1758) and Cuzzoni (1696-1778). At the same time he was a skilled dramatist. In *Serse*, the shortened lengths of the arias and the freer placed recitatives aid the drama's momentum in the plot development and give more emphasis on the text itself. Charles Burney said that *Serse* "gave Handel an opportunity of indulging his native love and genius for humour."³

In *Serse*, the composer himself wrote down his intentions on the onset of the arias. Hence, in Atalanta's first aria, No.7, he writes: *lo guarda con tenerezza, facendo molti vezzi* (she looks at him tenderly and flirtatiously). In another instance, right before Elviro's arietta in No.15 he writes, *pensa un poco e poi risoluto dice* (he thinks about it and then says with resolution).

The only ensemble scenes in *Serse* are three duets and one choral finale scene at the end. Though the work is full of structural deviations for an *opera seria* in the Baroque period, it is still a series of solo arias, unlike *Così fan tutte* and *Later the Same Evening*.

Interpreting Atalanta

Handel was a skilled and clever dramatist. The situations that Handel sets up in *Serse*, exemplify the dramatic structure. Atalanta's first musical entrance is in Act I, Scene 4.

³ Charles Burney, *A General History of Music*, II, London 1782: republished, ed. F. Mercer, London 1935/R 1957, p. 822., quoted in Terence Best, *Preface of Serse: Opera in tre atti*. HWV 40. (Kassel: Baerenreiter, 2006), IX.

Atalanta listens in on Arsamene and Romilda's conversation about how Serse wants to pursue Romilda. She listens, comments and delivers her own thoughts aside:

ATALANTA

Se puo vincerle il cor, o me felice!

If only Serse could conquer her heart,
oh how happy I would be –
then I could have Arsamene to myself

Ah, fosse infida!

If only she were unfaithful to Arsamene

Che doglia!

How painful it would be if Romilda were
to remain faithful to Arsamene

Handel's characters do not emerge in the recitatives as much as the characters in Mozart's *Così fan tutte*. In *Così fan tutte*, there is more weight in the recitatives as they are much longer in volume and much more conversational than the succinct and short phrases of Handel's recitatives. Nevertheless these short phrases are enough to give clues to her relationship with Arsamene and Romilda. There are no specific details about their past listed in the entire libretto but these few lines are enough to set the situation. It also tells me what Atalanta wants – to have Arsamene to herself.

There is no instrumental prelude or separate recitative leading to Atalanta's first aria except for Atalanta's words, *Ascolta, ascolta* (listen, listen). She sings *Si, si io vivo per te sol, io per te moro*, (Yes, yes, my darling, I live for you alone and I for you alone I die), as if declaring her love for Arsamene. Handel let Atalanta's first phrase of the aria be the words "Yes, my darling, I live for you" in introducing the character Atalanta. The composer wrote *lo guarda con tenerezza, facendogli molti vezzi* (she looks at him tenderly and flirtatiously) but the text itself and the music in F sharp minor creates such a

languorous and earnest mood. Upon studying the score for the first time, I was confused and almost believed that this was a true declaration of love on her part to Arsamene. There is no other background information given about Atalanta, except that she is Romilda's sister, secretly in love with Arsamene. In the re-reading of the score, I came across the short middle section, a small recitative of four bars, where she suddenly changes the subject from first person, *io*, (I), to third person, "Romilda". It was indeed clever dramaturgy of Handel to insert these two measures of recitative in the middle of the arietta.

ATALANTA

Romilda notte e di, va esclamando cosi:	It is Romilda who says these things,
"Io per te moro, io per te vivo sol."	night and day: "I die for you,
	for you I live alone."

I could follow that she was deliberately singing these words to hide her real feelings in it. She then sings the song to Romilda and Arsamene so that she can be flirtatious around Arsamene within her performance. In the staging, the director had me, as Atalanta, tagging along with her older sister's morning tryst with Arsamene. She entertains them with this love song, which reflects her true puppy love infatuation for Arsamene.

Atalanta's next entrance is in a recitative with Romilda. Atalanta tries to persuade and convince her sister to be prudent and accept the king's love for Romilda. She tries to persuade Romilda that since Arsamene will be an exile, it would be prudent of her to accept Serse. In this recitative, we learn about the quick-witted and crafty side of her by

the responses she gives to Romilda's questions. When Atalanta asks Romilda, "perdete un re per un perduto amante?" (are you going to lose a king for a lost lover), Romilda asks back what she is referring to by saying "perduto amante, e come?" (a lost lover, what do you mean?). Atalanta replies "ha il core acceso d'altre fiamme" (his heart is set on by a different flame). Romilda fires back "di chi?" (by whom), and Atalanta again answers "ben lo saprete" (you will find out).

I don't believe that Atalanta was prepared for these questions. Therefore, she spontaneously makes up lies presuming that she will get what she wants. While carefully trying not to draw attention to her real feelings, Atalanta casually and briefly mentions that she could take Arsamene since he will be a "left-over" once Romilda accepts Serse. One can see that Atalanta is still careful when she answers "No" to Romilda's question whether Atalanta loves Arsamene. It is in fact comical when she says, "No, I don't love him. But I will love him".

ROMILDA

E che dunque l'amate?

ATALANTA

No; ma poi l'amero.

I found the delivery of this line quite important in showing Atalanta's character. She is trying to pretend she does not love Arsamene and at the same time justifying her reasons for her taking Arsamene. It is a tactic she is using.

When Romilda notices her sister's intentions she warns her that whatever she tries will be in vain. It is here that Atalanta becomes offended. In the libretto, nothing is mentioned about their sibling relationship. So with the director's guidance, I supported my reasons for why Atalanta should be so upset and offended by Romilda's remarks. She has felt like a victim, always second in place in sibling rivalry, while her older sister always got the better toy, the prettier doll and the handsome boyfriend.

The first two words in her next solo recitative after Romilda's aria gave me a substantial clue to what would be happening next. Here she says: *per rapir quel tesoro che te colma di gioia, e me d'affani, se amor non basta, adoprerò g'inganni* (To snatch away this treasure that fills you with joy and me with distress, if love is not enough, then I shall use deceit.)

Handel changed structure to emphasize certain words. He, for example, inverted the verb in its infinitive form to the beginning of the sentence in order to give emphasis to its verb *per rapir*, to snatch away. He was decisive about making revisions to the libretto if he felt the dramatic necessity.⁴ This recitative is in fact very compact. This one single sentence gave me many clues about how she feels about Romilda, how she feels about Arsamene and what she will be doing next. Atalanta is now determined to even adopt deceit, *adoprerò gl'inganni*, to "snatch away" Romilda's treasure, *per rapir quel tesoro*,

⁴ Hans-Joachim Heidenreich. (June 1988). In *Serse*. (p.4) [CD Booklet] Translation by P. Addison. Berlin: Studios Classique.

Arsamene. In the previous recitative with Romilda, her language was still careful and indirect. Then follows this solo recitative that starts with the word “to snatch away” and ends with the word “deceit”. I could develop the train of thoughts that must have occurred during Romilda’s aria in order for Atalanta to arrive at this resolution.

When Atalanta told Romilda that she does not love Arsamene but that she will love him, Romilda asked her if she will be able to love him so quickly. Atalanta answered back that she will force herself to. It is here that Romilda finally catches what her sister is up to and gets upset. She says:

ROMILDA

Ah! Che pur troppo intesi!

Ah! I see what you intend!

Se l’idol mio rapir mi vuoi,

If you want to take my love from me,

cangia desio, ch’è vanita.

change your desires, for it is all in vain.

During Romilda’s aria, Atalanta is at first careful and a bit intimidated by her. Then as Romilda keeps telling her that Atalanta’s desire will be in vain, Atalanta remembers their history of sibling rivalry and how it made her feel inferior to her older sister. Though it is Romilda who first uses the word *rapir*, to snatch away, it only enflames Atalanta’s desire to want Arsamene more.

While thinking of a plan to win her battle against Romilda, Atalanta slowly remembers *un cenno leggiadretto, un riso vezzosetto, un moto di pupile*, (a light hand gesture, a charming smile, and a wink of an eye). Though she is awkward at it in the beginning,

she practices the gesture, the wink and the smile throughout the aria. She is ready to use all her feminine charms that can win a man's heart, in her case, Arsamene. At the end of the aria, she is confident and ready. Unfortunately, in the opera, we do not have the opportunity to actually see her employ any of these skills to demonstrate her determination. In Mozart's *Così fan tutte*, Despina also sings an aria, *Una donna a quindici anni*. We see her teaching Fiordiligi and Dorabella, on how to seduce a man.

As if to make use of her determination from the previous aria, the opportunity arrives when Elviro happens to be passing by, disguised as a maidservant, and shows her the letter from Arsamene that he must deliver to Romilda. Atalanta grabs the chance and deceives him by saying that Romilda is actually writing to the king a love letter and that she herself will hand the letter to Romilda. Again, we see her quick-wittedness and determination to achieve her goal as she thinks of more lies, spontaneously. The more lies she makes up, a higher risk is involved in her plan. The higher the risk gets, the scene becomes more dramatic and exciting.

Luckily for Atalanta, the king Serse happens to walk in while she is reading the letter Arsamene wrote for Romilda. Atalanta again seizes the opportunity to ensure the king that Arsamene loves her so that Serse himself can continue to pursue Romilda. She falsely asserts that the secret love letter is from Arsamene, written for herself and not Romilda. The King is suspicious but she succeeds in convincing Serse that the lie is true. In her aria *Dira che amor*, she then tells him that Arsamene will pretend that he doesn't love her. There is a comic touch as Atalanta sings this aria, reminding the king not to

worry about Arsamene's pretending not to know love her. Though in this production, there was a cut, in the original score the comic touch is stronger due to Atalanta redundantly and repetitively emphasizing her message through the lighthearted melody in the first and second verse with the full *da capo* repeats. These repeats appear to be written intentionally in order show that her chattiness irritates Serse.

Atalanta's next entrance is in the beginning of act 3 where she is confronted by Arsamene and Romilda. After being surprised for being caught, Atalanta explains to them what she did in a very brazen and unashamed manner then sings this Arietta No.44. The words are:

No, no, se tu mi sprezzi, morir non vuo.	No, even if you disdain me,
	I won't die from it.
Fo certi vezzi col mio sembiante,	I'll make charms with my face
che un altro amante trovar sapro	so that I can find another lover.

After the performances I heard comments from the audience that they found Atalanta "a rather cute and forgivable villainess." Interestingly, several people commented that they still had the *Un cenno leggiadretto* tune in their ears and were waiting to see when Atalanta would be actually using her charms. She is not a true villain. Her part in the story is to play out her agenda and become an obstacle to Romilda and Arsamene's love. Understanding the reasons why Atalanta is who she is allowed me to justify her "evil" actions. The more it seems that Atalanta is winning, the more suspense and tension it creates for the overall story. Will there be a happy ending? Unlike Mozart, it is

primarily through the solo arias that Handel, the dramatist-composer, allows us to see the significant development of the characters.



Così fan tutte

CLARICE SMITH PERFORMING ARTS CENTER
APRIL 18 - 27, 2008



CLARICE SMITH PERFORMING ARTS CENTER,
UNIVERSITY OF MARYLAND SCHOOL OF MUSIC,
AND MARYLAND OPERA STUDIO
PRESENT

Così fan tutte

An Opera in Two Acts

Composed by Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart
Libretto by Lorenzo Da Ponte
Performed in Italian with English titles

FRIDAY, APRIL 18, 2008 7:30PM
SUNDAY, APRIL 20, 2008 3PM
WEDNESDAY, APRIL 23, 2008 7:30PM
FRIDAY, APRIL 25, 2008 7:30PM
SATURDAY, APRIL 26, 2008 7:30PM
SUNDAY, APRIL 27, 2008 3PM
INA & JACK KAY THEATRE



PROGRAM

CAST:

Fiordiligi: Claire Kuttler (April 18, 20, 23 & 26), Jennifer Forni (April 25 & 27)
Dorabella: Jenna Leberherz (April 18, 23 & 26), Melissa Schiel (April 20, 25 & 27)
Guglielmo: Eric C. Black (April 18, 20, 23 & 26), Aaron Agulay (April 25 & 27)
Ferrando: Adam Hall
Despina: Jenny Chen (April 18, 20 & 26), Onyu Park (April 23, 25 & 27)
Don Alfonso: Andrew Adelsberger

ENSEMBLE:

Actress: Katherine Sanford
Companion: Marnie McLain
Spinster: Hayley Sanderson
Mother: Taryn Gordon
Wife: Alicia Waller
Mother: Cathy Teixeira
Newlywed: Gillian Kraus-Neale
Single Woman: Tanya Ruth
Soldier/Man 1: Rameen Chaharbaghi
Man 2: Patrick Barrett II
Doctor: Aaron McNeil
Albanian/Father: Spencer Goldberg
Husband: Jordan Mills
Father: Brendan Sliger
Newlywed: Dennys Moura
Single Man: Doug Yocum
Maitre d': Zain Shariff
Waiter: Tim Chen
Waiter: Christopher Newcomer
Albanian/Waiter: Logan Rucker
Waiter: Stephen Brody
Soldier/Waiter: Stephen Wilber
Children: Annie Lester, Ethan Rom

Covers: Stephen Brody (Don Alfonso), Gabrielle DeMers (Fiordiligi),
Logan Rucker (Ferrando), Stephanie Sadownik (Dorabella),
Alexis Tantau (Despina), Ethan Watermeier (Guglielmo)

Corrections on the cast list: Ferrando: Adam Hall (April 18, 20 & 26),
Logan Rucker (April 23, 25 & 27)

PROGRAM

Conductor: David Angus
Conductor/Music Director: Miah Im
Assistant Conductor: Daniel Chetel
Director: Leon Major
Scenic Designer: Misha Kachman
Costume Designer: David O. Roberts
Lighting Designer: Scott Bolman
Wig and Make-up Designer: Jeanne DiBattista Croke
Chorus Master: Timothy Reno
Continuo Pianist: Miah Im
Rehearsal Pianists: Sun Ha Yoon, Jessica Stitt
Production Stage Manager: Jeanette Gager

SETTING:

1913 — The action takes place in and around a beachside resort on the Mediterranean.

There will be one 20-minute intermission after Act 1.

Orchestral music edited for the *New Mozart Edition (Neue Mozart-Ausgabe)*
by Faye Ferguson and Wolfgang Rehm.

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Costumes constructed by Marianne Krostyne and San Diego Opera Costume Shop.

Chapter 2: Program Notes on *Così fan tutte*

The Structure

While *Later the Same Evening* starts with a duet then proceeds to a series of arias; *Seerse* starts with a solo recitative and aria; and *Così fan tutte* starts with a trio, then progresses to a duet and then a quintet. It is not until half-way through the first act of *Così fan tutte* that a solo aria appears. Even when a character is singing a solo aria, the other characters are usually the audience. Both acts in *Così fan tutte* end with a long finale that involve all six characters. Throughout the opera a character is rarely on stage alone. It is an ensemble opera.

Characterization of Despina

Despina's first entrance describes her attitude toward her life as a maid. She calls it *vita maledetta* (a wretched life) and complains that none of the work she does from morning until evening is for herself, or any of her class.

DESPINA

Che vita maledetta è il far la cameriera! What a wretched life this is being a servant!

Dal mattino alla sera si fa, From morning until evening working,

si suda, si lavora, e poi di tanto che si fa sweating, toiling, and of all that we do

nulla è per noi. Nothing is for us.

She, as a maid, has lived with what she thinks has been unfairness all her life and yet she has learned how to get around it, live with it and enjoy herself in the midst of it. For example, she takes time to sneakily sip the hot chocolate before Fiordiligi and Dorabella arrive. When they arrive in their woebegone state and tell her how terrible it is that their men have gone to battle, she responds nonchalantly, *Non c'è altro? Ritorneran....e piuttosto che in vani pianti perdere il tempo, pensate a divertirvi* (Nothing else? They'll come back. In the meantime rather than losing time in vain tears, you should think about enjoying yourselves.) Despina's response is a shock to the proper, square and dutiful Fiordiligi and the teenage drama queen, Dorabella. Both are innocent and naïve, at least in the beginning. In contrast, Despina is experienced, seasoned and therefore not easily moved by their emotional tantrums.

Atalanta, in *Serse*, deals with only five of the seven characters and Ruth in *Later the Same Evening* does not interact with any characters but herself. In comparison, Despina interacts with all five characters in the opera. It is through her interactions with other characters that we learn about Despina.

We learn about her philosophy of love in her first aria *In uomini, in soldati*. It shows immediately who Despina is. She scorns the girls for trusting men and says, *paghiam o femmine d'ugual moneta, questa malefica razza indiscreta*, (let us pay the men back with equal money). She has been around the block and knows the vices of men. She goes on to say; *in noi non amano che'il lor diletto, poi ci dispreghiano ne ganci affetto, ne val da barbari chieder pieta*, (they do not love us except for their own pleasure, then they

despise us, deny us affection, and it's no use begging for pity from barbarians). There is deep-rooted resentment inherent in the text. It would be easy to play the embittered Despina. Yet Despina is clever, independent and resilient enough that she will not allow her life as a servant in a less-privileged class to rule over her. On the contrary, she accepts what she cannot change (though complains about it) and then takes control in managing the household. I wanted to bring out the quick-witted and charming side of her as well. However, to play the quick-witted would have also been one-sided. To give depth to the character, I wanted to make sure that sourness and cynicism was the underlying layer beneath the fun and clever side of her.

Though Despina probably grew up with Fiordiligi and Dorabella, she outsmarts them and wants to teach the naïve girls a lesson. Despina introduces the girls to her philosophy of *amiamo per comodo per vanità*, (loving for comfort and vanity). It demonstrates the perky, carefree and lighthearted side of her. In her attempted persuasion, she notices that Dorabella seems more interested in what she has to say than Fiordiligi, she then pounds the ideas into Dorabella's ears, eventually leading Dorabella to "convert" sooner than Fiordiligi. Despina uses her wits and common sense in convincing Dorabella. The recitatives with the girls and her first aria, *In uomini, in soldati* are important clues to what kind of person Despina is. Therefore when Alfonso is making his suggestion later in the story, we understand why she agrees to his plan. Once we understand where Despina is coming from, we then understand her commitment to Alfonso's plan in support of her own philosophy.

At the beginning of the Second Act, Despina continues to teach the girls about the business of love. By this time Dorabella has been quite persuaded by Despina's schooling. Though Despina is a servant to the girls, she freely expresses herself, not sparing any expression that might be offensive to them. This time, the lesson in her second aria *Una donna a quindici anni* is: "how to lure a man". In the scene Despina strongly persuades the girls to enjoy themselves and to each choose one of the Albanians. She lists the tricks a young girl can use to attract a man:

DESPINA

finger riso, finger pianti,	feign laughter, feign tears,
inventar i bei perche...	invent good excuses....
Dee in un momento dar retta a cento	At one moment she must listen to a hundred
col le pupille parlar con mille	But speak with her eyes to a thousand
dar speme a tutti sien belli o brutti	give hope to all, whether handsome or ugly
saper nascondersi senza confondersi	know how to conceal the truth
	with a straight face,
senza arrossire, saper mentire	know how to tell lies without blushing

There is a stark resemblance to what Atalanta in *Serse* says in her second aria *Un cenno leggiadretto*.

ATALANTA

Un cenno leggiadretto	A graceful little gesture,
un riso vezzosetto, un moto di pupile	a charming little smile, or a twinkle in the eye:
puo far innamor	these can make a man fall in love.

Lusinghe, pianti e frodi son anche	Flattery, tears and trickeries are also
certi mod che destano faville	trustworthy methods that awakens a spark
che tutti io lo so far	and all of these I know very well.

Both arias talk about the trickeries a girl can use to lure a man.

Once again it is Dorabella who responds while Fiordiligi pretends not to be listening. Despina again aims to first persuade Dorabella. An important clue to how strongly persuasive Despina must be is the duet between the sisters that immediately follows Despina's aria. Surprisingly it is Fiordiligi who speaks up first: *Sorella, cosa dici?* At the end of their recitative they have already made up their mind on which Albanian they would each take. By now they have decided to make the most of the opportunity that Despina has been lecturing them about. Therefore, dramatically, it is highly important that Despina be strongly convincing in her argument with the girls.

I learned more about who Despina is by noting what other characters say about her. There are also clues in the way other characters treat her. For example, before approaching Despina for help, Alfonso expresses his concern and fear that she might find out about his scheme and ruin it. He calls her *furba*, a clever one.

DON ALFONSO

<i>Temo un po' per Despina</i>	I'm a bit worried about Despina
<i>Quella furba</i>	that little rascal
<i>potrebbe rovisciarmi le machine</i>	might (recognize the disguised fiancés and) upset all my plans

By his remarks, we suspect Despina's reputation is wily and cunning. We can also guess their past relationship by the way Despina says that a young girl like her does not need *un vecchio come lei*, (an old man like you).

ALFONSO

Despina mia, di te bisogno avrei.

My dear Despina, I need you

DESPINA

Ed io niente di lei.

And I don't need you

ALFONSO

Ti vo' fare del ben.

I want to do you a favor

DESPINA

A una fanciulla un vecchio come lei
non puo far nulla.

There's nothing an old man like you
can do for a young girl.

Yet Alfonso immediately gets Despina's attention by offering to pay money for her help. Despina does not hesitate in agreeing to be his mercenary. She is a shrewd business woman who is willing to work for own profit and to prove her superiority over the two sisters.

Though Fiordiligi and Dorabella are influenced by Despina's new school of thought, they still look down on her as a mere servant girl. In Act II, Despina tells the girls that they can invite the Albanians to their house while she spreads a rumor that the two men are Despina's lovers. Dorabella laughs out loud and says, *Chi vuo che il creda?* (Who will

believe that both men are coming to see you?”). Despina does not get intimidated but fires back, *Non ha forse metro una cameriera d'aver due cicisbei?* (Does a servant not have the merits to have two lovers?). She succeeds in convincing the girls to take her advice.

In our production, Despina, at the end of the opera, does not accept the money Alfonso agreed to pay her when she finds out that she has been outwitted by none other than Don Alfonso. She packs her belongings, quits her job as a maid to the sisters, and heads out into the world to find her own path and independence.

The Recitatives

Despina's thoughts, personality and character are revealed primarily in the recitatives. It is through the recitatives with her word play with other characters, that we see the whole person. One of the characteristics of Mozart's late operas was that the recitatives were much longer and more conversational. Thus, the delivery of these “dialogues” required utmost attention and practice.

The role demands a thorough understanding of the Italian language. It is imperative in order to bring the important words within the long and continuous phrases. A precise pronunciation of the language had to be accompanied with the necessary inflection of the sentences. This work is crucial in order to be a convincing and believable character on stage.

It was also important to find the right speed in delivering the recitatives. Because the recitative is essentially a dialogue between the characters, these conversations flow back and forth. In Despina's recitative with Fiordiligi and Dorabella in Act II, Scene 1, she once again talks the girls into enjoying themselves while the lovers are away.

DESPINA

Andate la, che siete due bizzarre ragazze! Well, you two are strange girls!

FIORDILIGI

Oh cospettaccio, cosa pretenderesti? Oh, heavens, what do you want from us?

DESPINA

Per me nulla. For myself, nothing.

FIORDILIGI

Per qui dunque. For whom, then?

DESPINA

Per voi. For you.

DORABELLA

Per noi? For us?

DESPINA

Per voi. Siete voi donne, o no? For you. Are you women, or not?

FIORDILIGI

E per questo? What do you mean?

DESPINA

E per questo dovete far da donne. I mean you should act like women.

Her recitative with the two sisters shows the thought processes that are built up one step at a time leading to a conclusion. The constant pressure of Despina persuades the girls to accept her philosophy of love. When the sisters are still unsure of what to do next, Despina then lists the many tricks a knowledgeable girl can use in her aria, *Una donna a quindici anni*. The conclusion that they arrive at – that the two sisters should be open to the wooing of the Albanians – makes it necessary for Despina to explain and teach the girls further on the trickeries the girls can use through her aria. Despina's aria then intensifies Fiordiligi and Dorabella's decision to define and start the next action.

DORABELLA

E poi?

And then?

DESPINA

E poi: caspita, fate voi.

And then, for goddness' sake, go on!

FIORDILIGI

Cosa dobbiamo far?

What should we do?

DESPINA

Quel che volete.

Whatever you want.

Siete d'ossa e di carne,

Are you made of flesh and blood,

O cosa siete?

Or what are you?

ARIA

Una donna a quindici anni

A girl at the age of fifteen,

Dee saper ogni gran moda...

Should know everything that goes on...

The thought processes of the characters and their reactions to what the other characters said had to be made clear. Therefore, it was important to find a pace that builds up the urgent dramatic or comedic tension in these conversations and at the same time enable the singers to project the words understandably and clearly. We found that pace through practice and practice, and more practice. Musically, it was important to bring out the words in their most natural way and also make sure it was not overly sung. I found the recitatives the key to the success of the whole production – almost more important than the sung parts.

Due to the amount of the recitative, there were cuts in the recitatives to limit the whole performance to two and a half hours. Nevertheless, the recitatives were still substantial. Therefore it was immensely helpful to hold recitative rehearsals on the day of the performances to remind us of the rhythms, words and pacing. In rehearsing the recitatives, each of us made sure we were listening and therefore reacting to what the other character was saying, rather than just mechanically reciting the memorized lines at its turn. We spent a lot of time giving feedback to each other on how to improve the timing, flow and emphasis of words as well as the pronunciation.

Despina's arias as well as the recitatives also required a good study of the text due to its syllabic setting of words to music. Her arias have very little melisma, compared to Fiordiligi and Ferrando's arias, and are set in a more declamatory, syllabic setting of words to music. Despina's low tessitura parts in the ensemble scenes, which are more suitable for a mezzo, proved to be a challenge at times. I had to make sure to keep the

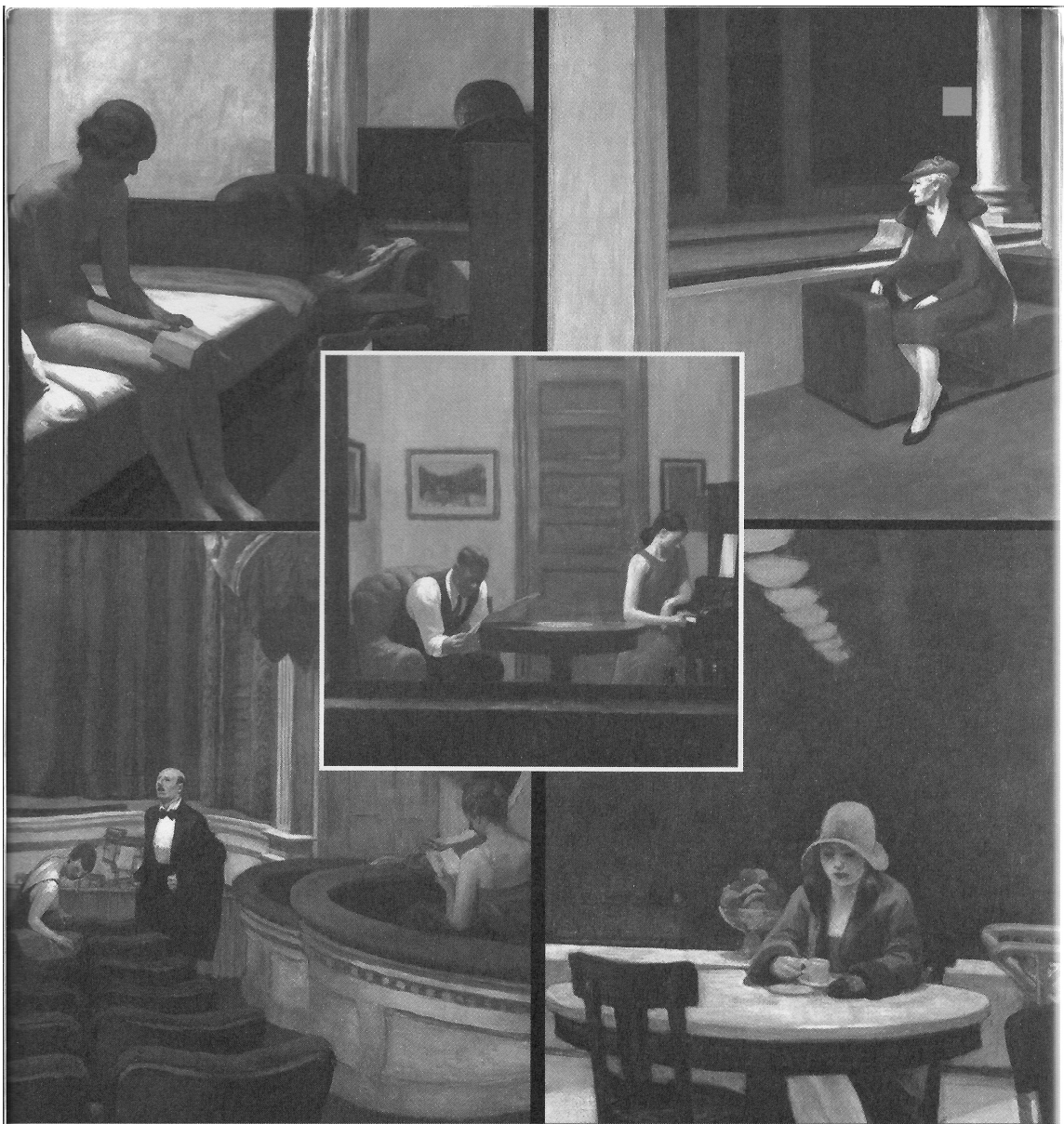
focus of the voice in order to not be totally covered by the other higher voice parts and the volume of the orchestra in the finales of both acts. In singing the ensemble pieces, quartets and sextets, the casts had to give extra care to the correct intervals between the voices and listen for the overall harmony.

Comedy

In the opera Despina must disguise herself and play a doctor and a notary. I thoroughly enjoyed playing the two different characters trying to be convincing enough to fool the lovers' quartet. Unlike mezzosopranos who have pants roles in their repertoire, sopranos rarely get a chance to play any role in trousers. Therefore even though I had to bear the discomfort of wearing a ring around the nostrils in order to wear a moustache, it was entertaining to be able to play these comic roles. In playing the notary, I was reminded of the basic principle of comedy: the more seriously I stayed in the character, the funnier got for the audience. I created a non-singing, squeaky voice as a notary. Then I was asked to try singing slightly under the normal pitch which was a challenge considering my perfect-pitch ears. After realizing how much funnier the slightly under-pitched voice was, the next challenge was to stay in character while the audience started laughing.

Conclusion

In such a tightly-structured ensemble work from the beginning until the end of the opera, our amicable and cordial group dynamic with the five other characters made the team work especially enjoyable. Though Despina does not have a vocal piece that required *tour de force*, it is a role that does require great acting skills, wit, a sense of comedy, timing and thorough knowledge of the Italian language. One of the fundamental deciding factors for success of the opera depends on the pivotal role of this “action figure”.



*Later the Same Evening:
an opera inspired by five paintings of Edward Hopper*

CLARICE SMITH PERFORMING ARTS CENTER
NOVEMBER 15-18, 2007



A JOINT PROJECT OF
THE CLARICE SMITH PERFORMING ARTS CENTER
THE UNIVERSITY OF MARYLAND SCHOOL OF MUSIC
AND THE NATIONAL GALLERY OF ART

Later the Same Evening:
an opera inspired by five paintings of Edward Hopper

composed by John Musto
libretto by Mark Campbell

Maryland Opera Studio
National Gallery Orchestra

THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 15, 2007 . 7:30PM
FRIDAY, NOVEMBER 16, 2007 . 7:30PM
SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 17, 2007 . 7:30PM
SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 18, 2007 . 3PM
INA & JACK KAY THEATRE

SUNDAY, DECEMBER 2, 2007 . 6:30PM
NATIONAL GALLERY OF ART, EAST BUILDING
WASHINGTON, DC

Edward Hopper (1882 - 1967)
Two on the Aisle, 1927
oil on canvas
Toledo Museum of Art, Purchased with funds from the Libbey Endowment,
Gift of Edward Drummond Libbey

■ CAST AND SETTING

Maryland Opera Studio

CAST:

(in order of appearance)

Elaine O'Neill
Gus O'Neill
Estelle Oglethorpe
Ruth Baldwin
Ronaldo Cabral
Sheldon Segal
Rose Segal
Thelma Yablonski
Jimmy O'Keefe
Valentina Scarcella
Joe Harland

Claire Kuttler
Andrew Adelsberger
Melissa Schiel
Onyu Park
Eric C. Black
Eric Sampson
Kara Morgan
Jenna Lebherz
Adam Hall
Jenny Chen
Ethan Watermeier

Study Covers: Elaine O'Neill – Jennifer Forni, Gus O'Neill – Stephen Brody, Estelle Oglethorpe – Alexis Tantau, Ruth Baldwin – Astrid Marshall, Ronaldo Cabral/Joe Harland – Aaron Agulay, Sheldon Segal – Curtis Bannister, Rose Segal/Valentina Scarcella – Gabrielle DeMers, Thelma Yablonski – Stephanie Sadownik, Jimmy O'Keefe – Logan Rucker

Conductor
Director
Scenic Designer
Costume Designer
Lighting Designer
Wig & Make-up Designer
Movement Consultant
Music Director
Rehearsal Pianists

Assistant Conductor
Assistant Director
Assistant Lighting Designer
Pit Pianist
Production Stage Manager

Glen Cortese
Leon Major
Erhard Rom
David O. Roberts
Nancy Schertler
Jeanne DiBattista Croke
Virginia Freeman
Miah Im
Sun Ha Yoon
Tessa Hartle
Daniel Walshaw
Heather Gilles
Sonya Dowhaluk
Sun Ha Yoon
Sean Corcoran

SETTING:

New York City. Early evening. 1932.

Running time is approximately 85 minutes with no intermission

Later the Same Evening is performed by arrangement with Peermusic Classical, publisher and copyright holder.

Valentina's aria was translated into Italian by Maurizio Toria.

Chapter 3: Program Notes on *Later the Same Evening*

Later the Same Evening is an opera inspired by five paintings by Edward Hopper, commissioned by the Clarice Smith Performing Arts Center, the National Gallery of Art, and the Maryland Opera studio. Leon Major, the director of Maryland Opera Studio and Stephen Ackert of the National Gallery of Art thought of commissioning a new opera in light of the retrospective exhibition of Hopper's works at the National Gallery of Art. American painter Edward Hopper (1882-1967) is considered one of the most "American" painters. America raced on towards industrialization and modernization at the turn of the century and Hopper maintained his realist style.

His works depicting the seascapes, lighthouses, landscapes and every day places are famous for their luminous quality based on his mastery of light and shadow. Hopper was exceptional in capturing the common and turning it into something extraordinary. Whether the subject matter is of nature or of the city, his works had a popular appeal. Carol Troyen, the head curator at the Boston Museum sums up the reasons behind his popularity: "Hopper was a brilliant image maker, expressive technician. His people (in his paintings) are easy to relate to".⁵

⁵ National Gallery of Art, Art Talk. "The Mystique of Edward Hopper." Hosted by Deputy Director Alan Shestack. Interview with Carol Troyen, curator emerita, Museum of Fine Arts, Boston. Online Podcast. <http://www.nga.gov/exhibitions/hopperinfo.shtml>

Indeed Hopper's people are simple people from our everyday lives. The librettist Mark Campbell went through Hopper's paintings until he chose five that spoke to him. He noted that the characters in Hopper's paintings tell a story. A story of alienation, disconnectedness, and solitude. Hopper, while living in his apartment in New York city, used to observe other people through his window in their daily living, people that were ordinary, alone and solitary. Many of his characters are either looking out the window or the viewer is invited to look into their windows. Are these characters waiting for something to happen? Or has something just happened? What were they doing just before and just after the moment caught on canvas? Lloyd Goodrich says in his book *Edward Hopper*, "Like stills for a movie or tableaux in a play, Hopper positioned his characters as if they had been captured just before or after the climax of a scene."⁶

It was Mark Campbell who imagined the before and after of the five scenes. He created a story that happens one evening in New York City based on the characters he chose from Hopper's paintings: *Room in New York*, *Hotel Window*, *Hotel Room*, *Two on the Aisle* and *Automat*.

The story is set in an art gallery in 1932 that is having an exhibition of Edward Hopper's paintings. The five paintings are hanging on the art gallery wall. The characters in the opera enter to visit the art gallery, each separately and stop in front of the painting that identifies them. Then each painting becomes a scene that is brought to life.

⁶ Goodrich, Lloyd, *Edward Hopper*, New York: H. N. Abrams, 1971

The Structure

The opera is comprised of solo arias, solo and duet scenes, one trio, and two large ensemble scenes. Musically, it includes a mix of different styles: a fugal and contrapuntal section (rain/theater ensemble), declamatory, recitative-like sections in the solo scenes (Ruth/ Estelle's solo), lyrical portions (Elaine/ Thelma's scenes), a jazz-like, bluesy solo (Ruth), musical theater-like tunes (Ronaldo Cabral/ theater scene) as well as passages of coloratura (Valentina).

The opera starts with Gus and Elaine's scene. Then it proceeds to a series of solo scenes: for Estelle, for Gus, and for Ruth's scene. Elaine, Estelle and Ruth sing a trio as their time and place overlaps. After a brief scene where Estelle and Cabral meet and head to the theater, the theater scene follows with Elaine, Estelle, Ronaldo, Sheldon, Rose, Joe, Valentina and Thelma. Jimmy and Valentina each have their solo arias. All the characters that come out of the theater sing in the rain ensemble, except for Valentina. Ruth joins the rain ensemble scene but it is not part of it. Gus and Elaine briefly meet in front of the theater and their scene is followed by Thelma's scene.

The Plot

The first painting *Room in New York* shows Gus seated in an armchair, reading his newspaper while Elaine is tapping on the piano, her body turned away from him. They are a young couple who are, it appears, not very happy in their marriage suggested through their body positions. In the opera, Elaine lives in denial of her unhappy marriage while Gus avoids talking about their problem. She wants to go to the theater to see the

hit musical of the season, *Tell Me Tomorrow* but Gus only talks about work and wants to unwind at the bar. The couple does not know how to communicate or connect with each other. Elaine heads to the theater alone.

The elderly woman in the second painting *Hotel Window*, is Estelle. In the opera she is recently widowed. She is alone, waiting to go to *Tell Me Tomorrow* with Ronaldo, a Portuguese immigrant and piano salesman from Greenwich Village who is full of enthusiasm and passion for life. As she eagerly waits for her first date with Ronaldo, she is also learning to let go of her dead husband and the upper class social rules that run her life. She no longer has to be the subservient wife.

The next painting *Hotel Room* shows a young woman, Ruth, alone in her room, dressed in a slip. Sitting hunched on her bed, she holds a letter in her hands. She is ready to head back to her hometown Indianapolis after having repeatedly failed the dance auditions in New York City. She is leaving a goodbye letter to Joe Harland, her boyfriend whom she was to meet at *Tell Me Tomorrow* that same evening. Elaine, Estelle and Ruth sing a trio. Elaine and Estelle each look through the window in their own solitude. Ruth looks out her window as she watches the city from her hotel room. Each of the three women is alone struggling with their own pain and hurt. Elaine knows that she cannot fake happiness in her marriage anymore. Estelle knows she must let go of her late husband. Ruth has to give up New York City and return to her hometown. Their time and space overlap in that same evening as they sing a trio. The time “seven fifteen” reminds them to move on to their next destination. Estelle and Elaine separately head to the theater and

Ruth leaves for the train station. As they go to their next physical destination, they also make an effort to move on to the next chapter of their lives. Ronaldo enters and dances with Estelle, to her embarrassment, and then cheerfully escorts her to the musical.

Two on the Aisle changes the scene and shows the theater where the musical is playing. Joe is eagerly waiting for Ruth at the theater and has a ring ready in his hand to propose to her. Sheldon and Rose from *Two in the Aisle* are a bickering, elderly couple that are clearly still fond of each other. Jimmy O'Neal is a young homosexual from Lynchburg, Virginia on his first trip to New York. He is expectant and excited to be in New York for unlike in Lynchburg, no one teases him for speaking French and enjoying operas. Jimmy decides to move to New York. Valentina, an opera fan from Italy, does not understand the musical genre. Thelma, the usher collects the tickets. Elaine, Jimmy, Sheldon, Rose, Estelle, Rolando and Valentina watch the show. Joe leaves the theater when he realizes that Ruth is not coming. As the crowd exits the theater it starts to rain. They open their umbrellas and try to hail a cab. Meanwhile Ruth is on a train to Indianapolis, thinking of Joe. Ruth's emotions contrast with Jimmy's emotions. While Ruth leaves the city utterly disappointed, Jimmy arrives to the city from a small town, full of hope and expectancy that he will find his luck and happiness in the city.

Thelma, the usher from the theater stops to have a cup of coffee in *Automat*, the fifth painting, as she unwinds before heading home to Brooklyn. She meets the disappointed Joe Harland. Gus meets Elaine in front of the theater and apologizes but Elaine still hides

behind her facade. Then all the characters come together as they each stand silently in front of their paintings at the art gallery.

The Theme

At first glance, the five paintings and their characters seem unrelated to each other. Ironically, it is solitude that they have in common. Each of the characters in the paintings faces solitude and struggle in their own way. Briefly these lonely characters come together and connect as an audience at the musical show, *Tell Me Tomorrow*. Hopper himself was fond of the theater and the movies. He is said to have frequented the movie theater during his creative block, sometimes watching two to three movies a day.⁷ Thus naturally, he painted the scenes and peoples observed at the theater. Likewise, the creators of the opera, Musto and Campbell allow the theater – a place where people forget their loneliness and daily troubles and become instantly absorbed into another world – to serve as a connecting point for these solitary characters. It is here that they become a part of a common force and emotional experience. The theater proves to be a place of solace and momentary comfort for these strangers before they then disappear into the night after the show.

Stage Effects

The stage direction for *Later the Same Evening* brings about a unique cinematographic effect. Each character comes across and lingers in front of the painting at the art gallery

⁷ National Gallery of Art Backstory: “Telling the Edward Hopper Story: Step behind the scenes of a world-class museum” with host Barbara Tempchin and Carroll Moore, film and video producer. Online Podcast. <http://www.nga.gov/exhibitions/hopperinfo.shtm>

that identifies them. Then, just as a video camera would zoom in on the characters, the scene changes one by one as each of their stories unravel. As the stories are told, each of the five paintings is projected onto the back wall of the stage. The audience becomes drawn into a cinematic ambience as they see the projection of Hopper's paintings on the screen, the same replicas of the singers they see on stage – the main characters they have been following in the opera up until that point. It is as if Hopper's paintings are photo snapshots of these real-to-life character's stories: as if the opera breathed a three dimensional life into these two dimensional characters from the canvas. In the very end, when the singers each stop in front of their painting at the art gallery, there is a “zoom-out” effect as if the video camera is zooming out. Thus, the focus moves from each of the paintings on the gallery wall to the real characters (from the paintings) on stage, and back to the paintings on the gallery wall. The audience now has come to know each of these people on a more personal way - who they are, what they were doing before they were captured on the canvas and what they will be doing afterwards.

Interpreting Ruth

Ruth's recitative and aria is a scene unto itself. The aria leads into the trio with Estelle and Elaine. Ruth's scene starts with her re-reading the letter she has written to Joe. The letter is a narrative of her story. As she re reads the letter it leads her to think about the relationship with Joe, her current state and New York City. This reflection is in her aria and it leads to a series of discoveries. As the night falls she looks out her window from her hotel room and watches various people in their rooms. She discovers that although the people all reside in the same city, each of them lead lonely lives and have nothing to

do with each other, “unconnected yet connected”. Her aria is according to Mr. Musto, a love song to New York. Ruth loves New York even though it is a lonely place. Then she remembers how the city turned her enthusiasm and excitement into bitterness and disappointment. She remarks how one comes to New York expecting to be noticed by the whole world and yet how easy it is to be unnoticed when one leaves the city.

RUTH

When you get to this town, gosh, when you get to this town,
You think the whole world notices you. Look, it’s me! Look, it’s me!
When you leave this town, God, when you leave this town...
It’s so easy to just slip away.

Her bitter feelings prompt her to finally finish signing the letter and to head for the train station. She inserts a train schedule to Indianapolis for Joe along with the letter.

Ruth has failed at countless dance auditions. Money is running out. She is disheartened. Bitterness and anger rise up in her as she talks about going back to Indianapolis. Ruth knows that she’ll be the talk of the town when she returns back to Indianapolis for not having succeeded in New York. Moreover, she will be the object of gossip for still not being married, which at that time would have been looked upon as a great failure for a young woman and her family. She admits that New York was not a place for the “star pupil of Ms. Beulah’s school of ballet” from Indianapolis.

RUTH

The truth is, I'm not really meant for this city.

Or maybe it just isn't meant for me.

After countless auditions, and mounting rejections,

The star pupil of the Miss Beulah School of Ballet

Must return to her small pond.

Ruth possesses a great sense of humor that is self-deprecating and cynical at times. She treats Indianapolis and what awaits her there with sarcasm.

RUTH

Hello, Indianapolis! Gosh it's great to be home...

How right you were, when you said I'd never make it.

How right you were, when you said the town'll kill me.

How right you were, yep, you bet.

And no, I am not married yet.

Her sarcasm shows her personality and also her acceptance of reality though she might face the scoff and gossip from the small town people.

The librettist Campbell chose "Indianapolis" because of its many syllables, making it a difficult word to sing. Musto sets the word "Indianapolis" in a syllabic setting and it brings out the edginess and the cynical side of her emotional state. The following musical excerpt is an example of the reoccurring jagged line motives which brings out the

words effectively in the declamatory style. The pitch intervals had to be studied thoroughly in these sections.

[Example 1]

Measures 614-623

614 *mf* *f*

Ruth me. Af - ter count - less au - di - tions, And mount - ing re - jec - tions, The

Pno.

617 *Freely* *Jauntily (♩=96)*

Ruth star pu - pil of the Miss Beau - lah School of Bal - let Must re - turn to her small pond

Pno.

Ruth stops rereading her letter and looks up a little angrily.

620 *mf*

Ruth Hel - lo, In - di - an - a - po - lis! Gosh, but it's great to be

Pno.

In some ways, I find Ruth somewhat stronger and even more obstinate and stubborn than Despina and Atalanta. She is unwilling to bend her ways but has only one option: to go back to Indianapolis. In my opinion, she could have perhaps depended on Joe, financially or emotionally, to stay in New York. Unlike Despina who works for money as a mercenary to help Alfonso in duping the girls, or Atalanta who is not hesitant about using deceit to accomplish her goals, Ruth is honest and does not manipulate Joe to merely stay in the city. So she leaves New York and does not try to find other alternatives to going back. In my mind, Ruth is a modern woman with an independent spirit. Unlike most women of the 1930s, she prioritizes her independence before her relationship and does not consider relying on Joe as an option.

Yet Ruth is guilty about leaving Joe and hesitates in writing the letter. Joe, when he later finds the letter, responds, “Why? Why did she do this?” His response indicates great shock since he was ready to propose to her at the theater. In her letter to Joe, Ruth writes that she would not want to hurt him: “But I’m not strong enough, if I were to see any hurt in your eyes.” Though Ruth is trying to end her relationship with him, her struggle and hesitation in writing out the letter and choosing the appropriate words to finish the letter reveals her warm and sincere feelings towards Joe.

Interestingly, Ruth is the only character that does not interact with anyone else in the opera but herself. Her scene is a soliloquy. Although she sings a trio, it is not a true interaction with Estelle and Elaine. Also, Ruth is the only one that does not appear at the theater. In the final ensemble scene, while other characters are out in the rain, in New

York, she is the only one indoors, on a train, leaving New York. Furthermore, though Joe and Ruth are a couple and their story is told through her reading the letter, the two characters do not actually interact or meet in the opera. There are no dates nor any break up scenes depicted. Therefore, it was up to me to imagine what kind of relationship she has with Joe.

Unlike the other two operas, I had the privilege of meeting and working with a live librettist - Mark Campbell. Our initial reading with Mr. Campbell was especially informative in acquiring the detailed background information of the characters from the librettist himself. The whole cast benefited from being able to ask him detailed questions about their character. Also, it was especially helpful to me in getting his feedback after the rehearsal runs. The emphasis on the text from both the librettist and the director was never too much.

The musical tempo of Ruth's scene was on the slower side all throughout. Therefore, it was especially challenging to keep the thought processes of Ruth and her body movements clear and big enough against the slow tempo of the music.

Another challenge was making sure that Ruth re-read the letter in a simple and straightforward way without getting emotional about it. The content of the letter was melodramatic enough that it was rather easy to fall into the trap of emoting too much or making it sound pitiful or sad.

RUTH

(Ruth re-reads the letter she has just written)

As for me, I will never forget you.

By the time you open this letter, I'll be on the train back to Indianapolis.

It would have been better to tell you in person, but I know I'm not strong enough.

If I were to see any hurt in your eyes,

(Looking up from her letter)

Those beautiful eyes!

...

(Re-reading her letter again)

I need you to know that this isn't your fault.

You're the most wonderful man in the world

And someday you'll find someone much more deserving than I.

...

(She resumes re-reading her letter.)

I know I have hurt you. For this I am sorry.

I hope in some way you will learn to forgive me.

As for me, I will never forget you.

In this scene, I had to make a clear distinction between the section where she re-reads the letter and the part where she stops re-reading. Objectivity was the key in delivering the letter so that it would make a stark contrast to the aria.

Most of Ruth's singing is set syllabically in a triplet rhythm, especially in the letter section. Therefore, it was important to keep the legato going through the jagged and edgy vocal line but make sure that every word was understandably sung.

[Example 2]

Measures 586 -594

43

Flowing (♩=72)

Ruth rereads the letter she has just written. *mf*

586 Ruth *gét you.* By the

Pno. *pp*

590 Ruth time you op-en this let-ter, I'll be on the train back to In-di-an-a-po-lis, It

Pno.

593 Ruth would have been bet-ter to tell you in per-son, But I know I'm not strong e-nough.

Pno.

Her scene alternates between a relatively lyrical section and a more declamatory, recitative-like section. Below is an excerpt from her aria “Out my one window” which is full of beautiful lyricism in a modern, bluesy style.

[Example 3]

Measures 627 - 630

682 *rallentando* **Gently** (♩ = 68) Ruth looks out her window. *mp*

Ruth

Out my one win - dow,

Pno.

686

Ruth

Night-time is fal ling o - ver the ci ty. Out my one

Pno.

At age nine, I was told by my mom that I lacked natural talent for the ballet. Now for the first time I had to perform professional ballet movements in public. Though Ruth was not good enough a dancer to succeed in New York, with the help of Ms. Virginia Freeman, our movement coach, I tried my best to look and move like a dancer at least on a semi-professional level.

The staging of *Later the Same Evening* was minimalistic. There were few props. Ruth has an imaginary radio that she turns on and off and an imaginary window that she looks out of. Keeping the location of these imaginary objects consistently and accurately was a part of the challenge. In the rain ensemble, she is on a train to Indianapolis though she is next to the other characters who have just come out from a theater and are trying to hail a cab in the rain. One chair indicates that she is in a different location.

In singing and acting the role of Ruth on performance night, the response of the audiences helped me to discover and realize another side of her that appealed to the audience: vulnerability. Her story of not “making it” in the city amidst thousands of people and having to leave her dreams in some form of disappointment is perhaps what many people in real life can identify with. In her aria, she says,

RUTH

You think the whole world notices you, Look, it's me! Look, it's me!

When you leave this town ...it's so easy to just slip away.

Thousands rush in, thousands rush out every day.

That line reminds us of the lonely, crowded city life where people come to gain recognition amidst the crowd but get so easily forgotten in the crowd. I knew the audience must have felt a certain empathy and pity for Ruth. Her scene had a personal, strong, poignant appeal to the audience.

Summary

Though Ruth's situation was depressing, Ruth was a role that I had empathy with. I grew from acting her on stage – someone who was dealing with pain, solitude, uncertainty of the future, and despair. Her character seemed so real especially to someone like me who is in the arts, and living in the modern world. The cynicism, humor, and lyricism in her music added enjoyable elements for me in preparing the role. Performing in the English language was a factor that led to a closer, more direct interaction with the audience.

Despina is an action figure role who is continuously involved in interactions with the other five characters. Her quick-wittedness, liveliness, and the *buffa* character demanded a consistently high level of physical energy and mental focus. I enjoyed studying a servant character - the walk, body movements and thoughts of Despina as a maid. Playing Despina taught me the seriousness and timing of comedy. It was amusing to play and sing the parts of the doctor and the notary in disguise.

In a very different way, playing a villainess, Atalanta, was a more satisfying experience than playing an ingénue (Ruth). Singing the role Atalanta was especially enjoyable as I took time to study, improvise, and come up with my own ornaments in the repeat sections of the *da capo* arias. It was a great learning experience to have to focus on the acting as well as executing the technical *bravura* of these ornaments correctly and effortlessly, at

the same time. Playing Atalanta also required a high level of energy especially in the scenes with Elviro and with Serse where she spontaneously and quickly makes up lies. It was fun to play the role of a schemer whose words and actions affected the lives of the protagonists. The more lies she made up, the higher the risk it was for her, which led to more excitement for the audiences.

Appendices

[Appendix A]

Musical Example of *Serse* from Act II Scene 2

97

Scena II
ELVIRO, poi ATALANTA

Recitativo

Szene 2
ELVIRO, dann ATALANTA

ELVIRO

Quel cu-rio-so è par-ti-to, oh! che in-di-scre-to! Mat-to non son per
 End-lich geht er, die-ser Span-ner. Mann, wie ab-scheu-lich! Doch ich bin schlaue, Ge-

dir-gli il mio se-cre-to. La si-gno-ra A-ta-lan-ta a me sen vie-ne. Oh! be-ne, be-ne, be-ne.
 - hei-mes hüt ich treu-lich. A-ber da, A-ta-lan-ta! Das Weib hat Ras-se. O Klas-se, Klas-se, Klas-sel

23. Arioso e Recitativo

Largo

ATALANTA *Be in the tragic*

ELVIRO

A pian -
 Zu e -

ge-re o-gno - ra A - mor mi de-sti na.
 wi-gem Wei - nen be - stimmt mich Gott A - mor.

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ELVIRO

Ah! chi vo - ler fio - ra di bel - la giar - di - na? Vo - ler gia -
 Hel Leu - te kauft Blu - men aus ei - ge - nem Gar - ten! Kauft Hy - a -

9

- cin - ta, vo - ler gel - so - mi - na?
 - zin - then, ver - schie - de - ne Tul - pen!

13

ATALANTA

O - là, vien qua. De - gli a - spri miei do - lo - ri l'a - cu - te spi - ne a -
 He, du, komm her. Die Dor - nen mei - ner Lei - den will ich zum Tros - te mit

still in tragic heroine mode

16

ELVIRO

ATALANTA

ELVIRO

ATALANTA

- dor - ne - rò co' fio - ri! Ma mi chi star? Non so. Mi ben guar - dar! Tu
 Blü - ten mir um - klei - den. Kennst mich nicht mehr? Wohl kaum. Guck noch - mal her! Bist

sit down to chase flower basket

casual

19 (riconosce Elviro)
(erkennt Elviro wieder)

ELVIRO

qui - vi? O sven - tu - ra - to! Guar - da be - ne ... che por - ti? Por - to un
du das? Du Un - glück - sel' - ger! Schau mich an, du ... Was ist das? Nur ein

21

ATALANTA

fo - glio d'Ar - sa - me - ne al - l'a - ma - ta Ro - mil - da. A me lo
Brief von Ar - sa - me - ne für die lie - be Ro - mil - da. Den gibst du

23

ELVIRO

ATAL.

ELVIRO

ATALANTA

por - gi. Glie - lo da - re - te po? Sì. Ma do - v'è? Sta nel - le stan - ze
mir mal. Ihr gebt ihn a - ber ihr? Ja. Gut, und wo? Sie ist in ih - rem
offer

26

ELVIRO

ATALANTA

su - e, scri - ven - do al re. Al re? Ma che gli scri - ve? Ch'in lui
Zim - mer und schreibt dem Kö - nig. Dem Kö - nig? Was könnt sie schrei - ben? Ihn zu

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ELVIRO

ATALANTA

spe-ra, in lui vi - ve. E d'Ar-sa-me-ne? Pun-to non si sov - vie-ne.
 lie-ben, treu zu blei-ben. Und Ar - sa - me - ne? Ihm gilt nicht ei - ne Trä-ne. [101]

Reich, nicht so occur to

24. Arietta Allegro

ELVIRO

Ah! ti - gre in - fe - de - le, ce - ra - sta cru - de - le, ce -
 Ah! Treibt sie's schon lan - ge, die scham-lo - se Schlan - ge, die

Elev.

6

- ra
scham

Elev.

11

- sta cru - de - le! Ce - ra - sta cru - de - le!
 - lo - se Schlan - ge, die scham-lo - se Schlan - ge?

Recitativo ed Arioso

ATALANTA ELVIRO

ATALANTA ELVIRO

Par - ti; il re s'av-vi-ci-na. Ah! chi vo-ler fio-ra di bel-la giar-
 Fort, fort, sonst sieht dich der Kö-nig. He! Leu-te kauft Blu-men aus ei-ge-nem

(va via in fretta)
 (läuft eilig weg)

4

- di - na, chi vo-ler fio-ra di bel-la giar-di - na?
 Gar - ten, Leu-te kauft Blu-men aus ei-ge-nem Gar - ten. [120]

Scena III

SERSE, e ATALANTA che legge
 basso il foglio d'Arsamene

Recitativo *transpose*

ATALANTA

(Con que - sto fo - glio mi fa - rò con - ten - ta.)
 (Mit die - sem Brief - chen hal - te ich mich schad - los.) [103]

(6b)

Szene 3

SERSE, ATALANTA, die stumm
 Arsamenes Brief liest

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